



NEWS

CONTACT: Fran Clader
(916) 843-3310

Media Relations Office
601 N. 7th Street
Sacramento, CA 95811

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CELL PHONE LAW RINGS IN TWO-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

SACRAMENTO, CA – Although California's hands-free law went into effect two years ago, statistics indicate far too many motorists are still not dialed-in to the rules and are either being cited for it or becoming a grim statistic.

"Many people were accustomed to using cell phones while driving before the law took effect, and it may be difficult for some people to change this practice," said Commissioner Joe Farrow. "However, we all need to try hard to obey this law since driving is a complex task, requiring a motorist's full attention. Even a moment of inattention can have disastrous consequences for a driver and those around them."

Cell phones are the leading, identifiable, contributing factor to inattentive driver crashes in California. According to the CHP's Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System (SWITRS) data, since the inception of the hands-free law, there have been more than 1,200 collisions throughout the state, where a contributing factor was inattention by the driver due to cell phone usage. Those same collisions resulted in 16 fatalities and more than 850 victims injured.

The law, which went into effect July 1, 2008, prohibits the use of handheld cell phones by all motorists. In addition, it forbids anyone under the age of 18 from using any type of cell phone--handheld or hands free--while driving. Six months later, a ban on text messaging by drivers was put into effect.

Since the law's inception in July 2008, CHP officers have issued more than 244,000 citations statewide to motorists who were in violation of the hands-free law, according to SWITRS.

"Too many motorists have been injured or died because of inattention while driving," added Commissioner Farrow. "Drivers need to put down the phone and focus on driving; otherwise it may cost you your life, or the life of your loved ones."

Cell phone violations carry a minimum base fine of \$20 for the first offense and \$50 for the second. When court costs and other fees are added to the fines, the total cost of the violation quickly exceeds \$100 for the first offense.

For more information about the hands-free laws, including a list of Frequently Asked Questions, please visit the CHP's website at www.chp.ca.gov.

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